

Communication with Parents

Key findings in early child development research

Research has established that new-borns have roughly the same number of brain cells as adults but their neurons are disparate and unconnected. They connect extremely quickly after birth, reaching a peak of over one hundred trillion connections (synapses) by age two – double the adult number. A process of “pruning” then starts, in which the number of synapses is rapidly pared down. Synapses which successfully participate in a circuit are strengthened, while those, which are not utilised, are eventually eliminated. The motto here is “use them or lose them”, just like paths in a forest.

In essence, the young child’s brain is being “live wired” to its environment through a complex interplay of genes and world-life experiences. Therefore, the “environment” becomes crucial – both the home environment and the early school learning environment. Extensive research has established the following characteristics for the ideal early school-learning environment:

- Pre-school attendance from the age of two (but not earlier)
- What matters is the duration of attendance in months, with full-time attendance yielding no better results than part-time attendance
- The most beneficial settings are those which ‘integrate’ education and care, while following high-quality early childhood programmes which treat cognitive, social-emotional and physical development as complementary and mutually supportive
- These settings also feature highly qualified teaching staff, deploy high adult: child ratios and support parent involvement
- Environmental continuity is highly beneficial during this period of rapid development, in terms of familiarity with people (both adults and fellow pupils), predictability of interaction patterns based on a consistent ethos, as well as a sense of safety and security

Based on various articles, studies and other sources, with particular reliance on the recent book “The Brain – The Story of You” by David Eagleman (2015) and the UK’s EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-School Education) project, the first major European longitudinal study of young children’s development between the ages of 3



Further information

The EYFS is the statutory framework, which sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. It promotes teaching and learning that ensure children’s ‘school readiness’, and gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills which provide the right foundation for positive future progress through school and life.

It is comprised of four guiding themes. The three themes of ‘a unique child’, ‘positive relationships’ and ‘enabling environments’ underpin and support the fourth theme of ‘learning development’, which is divided into two groups with a total of seven areas of learning:

Prime areas:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Physical development
- Language and communication

Specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

For each area of learning, we plan for and provide a wide range of activities and opportunities, which build on and extend what children already know and are interested in. They are designed to motivate, support and meet the developmental needs of each child, helping them to be involved.

In terms of human development, the **importance of early childhood education** cannot be overstated. A child's **early years** are the foundation for his or her future development, providing a strong base for lifelong **learning** and **learning** abilities, including cognitive and social development.

From September 2021, across the five Early Years settings in Oak Trees Multi-Academy Trust in each setting, it is our aim to keep you informed of the learning taking place within the setting and of further opportunities for you as parents/carers to engage with your child's learning.

How will we communicate with you?

- Transition pack issued in summer term prior to attending school to provide relevant information regarding each setting. Parents will be asked to complete necessary paperwork, which will be sent electronically out to parents/carers.
- Visits to school setting in advance of joining the setting, in preparation for September.
- Termly on-line parent consultations via School Cloud
- Termly, progress postcards to summarise your child's key achievements. If a further meeting is required based on information shared in the postcards then this will be arranged,
- Parent workshops to receive Phonics training and support in teaching of Maths.
- Curriculum open afternoons for children to share their work and learning experiences.

